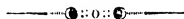


ADDRESS

TO

ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETIES.



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DEAR FRIENDS:—In that love for our cause which knows not the fear of man, we address you, in confidence that our motives will be understood and regarded. We fear not censure from you for going beyond the circle which has been drawn around us by physical force, by mental usurpation, by the usages of ages—not any one of which, can we admit, gives the right to prescribe it; else might the monarchs of the old world sit firmly on their thrones—the nobility of Europe lord it over the man of low degree—the chains we are now seeking to break continue riveted on the neck of the slave. Our faith goes not back to the wigwam of the savage, or to the castle of the feudal chief, but would rather soar with hope to that period when “*right* alone shall make *might*”—when the truncheon and the sword shall lie useless—when the intellect and the heart shall speak and be obeyed—when “He alone whose right it is, shall rule and reign in the hearts of the children of men.”

We are told that it is not within the “province of woman,” to discuss the subject of slavery; that it is a “political question,” and we are “stepping out of our sphere,” when we take part in its discussion. It is not true that it is *merely* a political question,—it is likewise a question of justice, of humanity, of morality, of religion; a question which, while it involves considerations of immense importance to

the welfare and prosperity of our country, enters deeply into the home-concerns, the every-day feelings of millions of our fellow beings. Whether the laborer shall receive the reward of his labor, or be driven daily to *unrequited* toil—whether he shall walk erect in the dignity of conscious manhood, or be reckoned among the beasts which perish—whether his bones and sinews shall be his own, or another's—whether his child shall receive the protection of its natural guardian, or be ranked among the live-stock of the estate, to be disposed of as the caprice or interest of the master may dictate—whether the sun of knowledge shall irradiate the hut of the peasant, or the murky cloud of ignorance brood darkly over it—whether “every one shall have liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience,” or man assume the prerogative of Jehovah, and impiously seek to plant himself upon the throne of the Almighty; these considerations are all involved in the question of liberty or slavery.

And is a subject comprehending interests of such magnitude, merely a “political question,” and one in which woman “can take no part without losing something of the modesty and gentleness which are her most appropriate ornaments”? May not the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit” exist with an upright mind and enlightened intellect, and must woman necessarily be less gentle because her heart is open to the claims of humanity, or less modest because she feels for the degradation of her enslaved sisters, and would stretch forth her hand for their rescue?

By the Constitution of the United States, the whole physical power of the North is pledged for the suppression of domestic insurrections, and should the

slaves, maddened by oppression, endeavor to shake off the yoke of the task-master, the men of the North are bound to make common cause with the tyrant, and put down, at the point of the bayonet, every effort on the part of the slave, for the attainment of his freedom. And when the father, husband, son, and brother shall have left their homes to mingle in the unholy warfare, "to become the executioners of their brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands," will the mother, wife, daughter, and sister feel that they have no interest in this subject? Will it be easy to convince them that it is no concern of theirs, that their homes are rendered desolate, and their habitations the abodes of wretchedness? Surely this consideration is of itself sufficient to arouse the slumbering energies of woman, for the overthrow of a system which thus threatens to lay in ruins the fabric of her domestic happiness; and she will not be deterred from the performance of her duty to herself, her family, and her country, by the cry of "political question."

But admitting it to be a political question, have we no interest in the welfare of our country? May we not permit a thought to stray beyond the narrow limits of our own family circle, and of the present hour? May we not breathe a sigh over the miseries of our countrymen, nor utter a word of remonstrance against the unjust laws that are crushing them to the earth? Must we witness "the headlong rage or heedless folly," with which our nation is rushing onward to destruction, and not seek to arrest its downward course? Shall we silently behold the land which we love with all the heart-warm affection of children, rendered a hissing and a reproach throughout the world, by this system which is already "tolling the death-bell of her decease among the nations?" No:

the events of the last two years have "cast their dark shadows before," overclouding the bright prospects of the future, and shrouding the destinies of our country in more than midnight gloom, and we cannot remain inactive. Our country is as dear to us as to the proudest statesman, and the more closely our hearts cling to "our altars and our homes," the more fervent are our aspirations that every inhabitant of our land may be protected in his fireside enjoyments by just and equal laws; that the foot of the tyrant may no longer invade the domestic sanctuary, nor his hand tear asunder those whom God himself has united by the most holy ties. Let our course, then, still be *onward!* Justice, humanity, patriotism, every high and every holy motive urge us forward, and we dare not refuse to obey. The way of duty lies open before us, and though no pillar of fire be visible to the outward sense, yet an unerring light shall illumine our pathway, guiding us through the sea of persecution and the wilderness of prejudice and error, to the promised land of freedom, where "every man shall sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid."

The numerous small societies, scattered over the various districts of our extended country, we would greet with affectionate interest, with assured hope.

Though you are now only as glimmering lights on the hill tops, few and far between, yet if with all diligence these fires be kept burning, the surrounding country shall catch the flame—the chains fall from our brethren, and they unite with us in the jubilee song of thanksgiving. To bring about this glorious consummation of our hopes, we must be diligent in business, fervent in spirit; there must be the patient continuance in well doing of those who have been battling for the world's freedom, and who have

counted nothing too near or too dear to sacrifice for their brethren in bonds; there must be an increase of energy and zeal in the many who have enlisted in the ranks of the friends of freedom. In joining an Anti-Slavery Society, we have set our names to no idle pledge. Let not any one member feel released from individual action; though by association we gain strength, yet it is strength to be used by each individual. The day, the hour calls imperatively for "doing with all our might" what our hands find to do; the means are various. To some among us may be given the head to devise, to others the hand to execute; one may have time to devote, another money; let each give liberally of that which he or she possesses. Time, talents, influence, wealth, all are required, all will aid in the great enterprise. Let each one seriously inquire how he or she can availingly promote the cause, and in that department faithfully work. Let the aged counsel, the young execute; plead not inability: we much fear that many among us rest satisfied with "the name to live and yet are dead." We give in our names as members of a society, pay a small annual subscription, and attend the meetings of the society. So far is well, but much more is needed for the accomplishment of our work. Ignorance yet remains to be enlightened, prejudice to be removed, injustice to be overthrown; and daily, almost hourly opportunities may offer to exert our strength where it can be availingly applied; and in order to do this keep yourselves informed of every Anti-Slavery movement. The editor of the *Emancipator* says:

"Other things being equal, those are the most efficient abolitionists who are the most intelligent; and, commonly, the most good is done in those places where our books and publications are most circulated and read."

Another editor, commenting on the above, says:

“Every word of this is true. We know a society of 120 members. Forty-one Anti-Slavery papers are taken by them, and well circulated. The result is, it has had a rapid increase, it exerts a decisive influence on the community in which it is located, its prospects are most flattering, and no society has acted more efficiently in the petition business. We know of another society of forty-six members, of whom only two or three take an Anti-Slavery paper. Societies will not act efficiently, they cannot act intelligently, they must backslide, if they do not supply themselves well with Anti-Slavery publications. Is it not a shame, that within the limits of societies numbering forty, sixty, seventy members, but two or three numbers of our paper should be taken? Nay, we have been told of one large society, that not only took no Anti-Slavery papers, but had never sent up delegates to our anniversaries, and, in fact, knew nothing about them. In the name of common sense, what good does such a society propose to accomplish? A light under a bushel might as well be put out. Organization without effort is all a farce. An artificial skeleton of dry bones has no more power, than the same bones had before they were jointed, wired, and so arranged as to constitute a *form* of life.”

The taunting question heard so long and so untiringly repeated, “What has the North to do with slavery?” is most triumphantly answered by the practice of any one active, consistent member of an Anti-Slavery Society, as “we remember them in bonds as bound with them.” We find we have much to do, much even for ourselves. How slowly, yet how surely, do we feel the loosening of those bonds of prejudice wherewith we have been bound; how slow were we to feel the truth that all men are indeed “born free and equal?” How much do we find to do in acting up to this doctrine, in our closets, in our families, in our intercourse with the world, and by the way side! The attentive consideration of what we owe to our colored brethren, will dispose us to

manifest our sympathy with them; and to show them by our conduct that we do not consider them as strangers and aliens; that we appreciate their manly struggles for the advancement of their race; and when favorable circumstances permit the escape of any beyond the prescribed length of the chain which has bound them, we cannot, we dare not join in the rude ridicule of the vulgar, the sneering contempt of the supercilious, or the mistaken kindness of the benevolent, who say that to awaken their sensibilities to their grievances would be cruelty in the extreme; that "where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." We see the fallacy of this hackneyed sentiment. Ignorance is not bliss—insensibility is not enjoyment. The objector little knows how tightly these fetters of caste have been drawn around, how deeply they have scarred their victim! how bitterly the injustice has been felt, and the more intensely, as it has been borne in silence, without either the solace of sympathy or the hope of relief.

The education of colored children recommends itself to abolitionists, as the most efficient means of raising them from their present despised condition. Many societies have established schools, (ought not all to do it?) wherein their younger members cheerfully devote a portion of their leisure time to the instruction, not only of the children, but of adults. The eagerness for learning manifested by most escaped from the house of bondage, their anxiety to improve the intervals of labor in acquiring knowledge, is too touching to be unnoticed or disregarded; it proves that their ignorance is not natural stupidity, that their degradation is the work of the oppressor, that the darkness in which they have been shrouded is a darkness to be felt. Let us, then, encourage and aid their earnest efforts, and though in many instances little



can be done towards repairing their deep wrong in their own persons, yet we can incite them to provide by industry, frugality, and enterprise, all the blessings of freedom for their children.

While we thus labor to restore to our colored brethren the rights of which they have been so long and so unjustly deprived, let us endeavor to come to the work with pure hearts and clean hands. Let us refuse to participate in the guilt of him "who useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." Whether we are guiltless of such participation while we continue to purchase and use the products of unrequited toil, becomes a question of serious import, and one which we recommend to your attentive consideration.

It is not necessary to enter into a labored argument to prove that one of the main props of the system of slavery is the price paid by the inhabitants of non-slaveholding states and countries for the productions of the states in which slavery prevails. This is so evident that we presume none will dispute it. Considering the fact, then, as admitted, we would ask, what is the slaveholder but our agent, holding and using his human chattels for our benefit? and if it be true that "what a man does by another, he does himself" are we not partners with him in guilt? With what consistency, then, can we demand that he "undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free," while we continue to pay him for retaining them in bondage?

Our inconsistency, in this respect, does not escape the vigilant eyes of our opponents. Said a slaveholder to an abolitionist, "we make the sugar, and you buy it," thus plainly intimating that if they were culpable, we were far from blameless. We feel that on this point we have been verily guilty, and though the

scales are falling from the eyes of many, yet much remains to be done among ourselves. And what are the motives that restrain us from acting consistently on this subject? Are we unwilling to forego a few sensual gratifications in such a cause? Will we not consent to be somewhat more coarsely clothed and to deny the palate some of its wonted gratifications, rather than contribute to swell the burden of sighs and groans which unceasingly ascend from breaking hearts to the throne of Him "who executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed?"

In presenting to your consideration a few remarks on the subject of peace, we would not be understood as wishing to identify the anti-slavery cause with that of peace. We no more desire that the Anti-Slavery Society should become a Peace Society, than we wish it to be a Temperance, Bible, or Missionary Society. We believe that each of these objects may be best promoted by a distinct organization of its friends. Nor have we any intention of discussing the abstract question of the lawfulness of war, or the *right* of using violence in self defence. We would only suggest to you, the importance of carefully examining how far abolitionists are restrained from the use of such methods of defence, by their declaration of sentiments, issued at the time of the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society; and what the influence of its use would probably be upon our cause. From these two positions only, do we feel at liberty to present the subject.

The declaration of sentiments of the Anti-Slavery Convention, assembled in Philadelphia in 1833, contrasts the principles and measures of abolitionists, and those of our revolutionary fathers, in the following language:

"*Their* principles led them to wage war against

their oppressors, and to spill human blood, like water, in order to be free. *Ours* forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to reject and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage; relying solely upon those which are spiritual, and mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds."

"*Their* measures were physical resistance—the marshalling in arms—the hostile array—the mortal encounter. *Ours* shall be such only as the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption—the destruction of error by the potency of truth," &c.

Sentiments analogous to these have been incorporated into the constitutions of many Anti-Slavery Societies, and are supposed to be adopted by abolitionists generally. Are we not, by them, bound utterly to reject the use of weapons of physical resistance, in our efforts to promote the emancipation of the slave? How far the restriction is applicable to cases of defence against invasion of the personal rights of abolitionists, while acting as such, each must decide for himself. We regard such a decision of so much importance, that we would urge upon you a serious reconsideration of the subject.

Without entering at all into a discussion of the *right* to adopt such measures, we think it may be shown that their use would injure rather than aid our cause. In the few instances where the lives of abolitionists have been in immediate peril, has it not been seen that non-resistance has as effectually shielded the individual, as an opposite course of conduct, while it won more honor to his principles? And has it not in all ages, among all classes of men, been established as a general truth, that, while physical strength and violence may be foiled or overcome, unresisting and forbearing meekness is almost omnipotent in the pro-

pagation of truth. The "wisdom of this world" has never understood "the philosophy of forgiveness." The patient endurance of injuries, the returning of good for evil, exert an influence on the human soul, so silent that it cannot be believed in, until it is felt, and yet so mighty, that it has been compared, by Him who "knew what was in man," to heaping coals of fire on the head. We deem it very desirable and important that so powerful an influence should be enlisted in behalf of the anti-slavery cause. The work that we have to perform is an *Herculean* task, and we would gladly avail ourselves of all righteous means of hastening its accomplishment.

It is a universally admitted truth, that opposition strengthens human purpose, unless the judgment and conscience are convinced that the course pursued is wrong or inexpedient. Such conviction is not produced, is not designed to be produced, by the measures which we are discussing; therefore, they unfit the mind for the reception of truth, and the heart for righteous action. Thus the only influence which their use exerts upon the progress of anti-slavery principles, is deleterious. And even if it were admitted that they are sometimes necessary for the preservation of life, are there not those who love the cause of freedom and of God, with an ardor sufficient to induce them to suffer the loss of life, rather than injure the prosperity of that cause?

To pursue the discussion of this subject farther, would perhaps be to transcend our prescribed limits. We earnestly and respectfully commend it to the attention of our fellow laborers, especially to that portion of them who believe that Christianity justifies a resort to arms for self-preservation. Those who do not thus believe, of course, need not such arguments as we have presented.

Aware that a disposition to "prove all things," has ever been characteristic of abolitionists, we feel assured that by careful study, and fervent prayer, they will be enabled to choose right paths for their feet, and that, in the accomplishment of a work upon which God has so manifestly set his seal of approbation, his servants will not be left unaided by the illuminations of that Holy Spirit who was sent to guide them "into all truth."

In looking back on the past, have we not much to encourage us to persevere in the work set before us? For a long period a solitary voice was heard crying in the wilderness; now there is the shouting of a host. Then was demanded a little more sleep, a little more slumber; now there is the awakening of the nation; and though not yet sufficiently aroused to discern friends in those who have shaken this false rest, yet if we fail not in our duty, there can be no more "folding of the hands to sleep," but our country will arise and go forth, clothed with majesty, and girded with power.

In behalf of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, assembled at Philadelphia.

MARY S. PARKER, *President.*

ANNE W. WESTON,	} <i>Secretaries.</i>
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